

SIGHTS AND SCENERY.

Royal Princess's Theatre.—The construction of the dramatic romance, called *The Corsican Brothers*, which has been produced here with great success, is very peculiar, and it is carried out with a completeness and a power that render it singularly effective. One peculiarity is, that the action of the first and second acts is supposed to occur simultaneously. While the first act ends with the one brother and his mother in the hall of their chateau, on the stage, and a tableau revealing, as in a vision, the death in a duel of the other brother, the second act ends with the duel on the stage, and the interior of the chateau as a tableau in the back-ground. The supernatural effects are admirably well managed. The burden of the piece is borne by Mr. Charles Kean, who plays the two brothers, with great ability and effect. Mr. Wigan has a too life-like sketch of a French *roué* duellist, which he fills up with the hand of a master; and all the smaller parts are well played. The scenery, especially the interior of the Opera House, Paris, during a masqué ball (painted by Dayes and Aglio), is very clever.

The French Plays.—Déjazet is one of the greatest mistresses of her art, in her peculiar line, living, and may be usefully studied by all our English comedy actresses with but two or three exceptions. It is not acting by starts with her: it is not a series of speeches and relapses, but a complete identification with the part, whether in conversation or silent. Mr. Mitchell has begun his season well, and if we may judge from the appearance of the house on Wednesday night when *Cesar et Napoléon* and *Les premières Armes de Richelieu* were played, is receiving the encouragement he deserves.

THE COST OF COLNEY HATCH COUNTY LUNATIC ASYLUM.

You will, I trust, follow Mr. Northall Lawrie's example, and not be deterred from freely animadverting upon the matter of the Colney Hatch Asylum by its being "an unpleasant affair." Were their unpleasantness allowed to operate as a bar to inquiry and discussion, impunity would be held out to all abuses. Take my word for it, there is, as Carlyle says, "nothing like making a row about things." I once told an editor friend of mine, whose foible was scrupulousness and false delicacy, that either an action against him for libel, or a horsewhipping, which would enable him to bring his action for assault against the flagellator, would be the making of his publication. Speaking quite impartially and disinterestedly, I should recommend the chance of a horsewhipping, with a thousand pounds damages, as the best course of all.

Q. IN THE CORNER.

SIR,—A second premium for a design for the Colney Hatch Asylum having been awarded to Mr. Godwin and Mr. Harris, I am aware that the Editor of *THE BUILDER* would feel a delicacy in making any observations on the deception that seems to have been practised as to the cost of the selected design, which had, at all events, one vote (I can affirm) in opposition to strong prepossession in favour of the second design, simply because it was stated that it would be less expensive. Surely, however, it is due to the profession and the public that you should record the facts. Permit me, therefore, to state, as already reported in the newspapers, that the magistrates held a meeting on 26th ult. at which Mr. Northall Laurie made an able statement as to the new asylum, the expenditure on which structure, he alleged, would now exceed 290,000*l.* although Mr. Daukes's estimate for the plan selected in competition was only 80,000*l.* to which, however, must be added 34,000*l.* in consequence of alterations which were made after the selection, especially in the wards, which were regarded as too small, and for ventilating and other towers, two school-rooms, and an enlargement of the chapel and offices. That thus 114,000*l.* was the actual amount of the architect's first estimates, but that the lowest tender, subsequently obtained, was 26,000*l.* beyond these

estimates, or 138,000*l.* That a number of things, moreover, were proposed in the instructions which were not provided for even in these estimates, such as a boundary brick wall, 2,500*l.*; earthwork and laying out grounds, 12,281*l.* odd; and even roads, 16,430*l.* A fee of 300*l.* had been given for a design for laying out the grounds. Such expenditure he regarded as a reckless waste of the ratepayers' money. In conclusion, Mr. Laurie carried a motion that the Court be furnished with the instruction issued in July 1847, for the guidance of parties competing, and with any subsequent ones, also the specification, and the total expenses. Mr. Pownall replied at some length to Mr. Laurie, and stated that, without altering the plan, they were able to accommodate 1,500 instead of 1,000 patients, by improving the interior fittings; and that if the building were to be again erected, and another committee appointed, he was not aware that any material alteration could be made in the expense. What a lesson this should be to committees appointed to select designs sent in for competition, and to architects who are foolish enough to waste their time on a chance.

A JUSTICE OF PEACE.

•• "A Justice" comes much nearer our motives for silence on this occasion than "Q." We can honestly fulfil our duty to the public without any fear or probability of a "horsewhipping," and fortunately our journal does not need the assistance of so slashing a catastrophe.

THE PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION OF WORKMEN.

LECTURES AT GEOLOGICAL MUSEUM.

A CORRESPONDENT, "C. B. A." in a communication which we regret that our limits prevent us from giving verbatim, offers, on the course of lectures now in progress at the Geological Museum, some important reflections, the pith of which consists in a proposal to substitute for mere words, models, drawings, &c. a practical explanation and conduction of some one process of manufacture or art, as far as possible, throughout all its details, so as to interest and instruct the workman, occupied in general with merely some one detail, as to the whole series of operations throughout which the material he works with passes in its progress from the raw state to the state of finished perfection as an article of sale. In this way the workman would be enlightened not only as to facts, but their relations or connections, in practical sequence. It is, as the writer agrees with us in remarking, a gross error to imagine that a collection of mere facts is knowledge. The relation, order, sequence, and other connections of facts are absolutely essential to a true knowledge even of the facts themselves, which, without their relations, are but so many bricks without either the mortar to cement them or the plan on which they are to be cemented. "C. B. A." admits that in such a lecture as that by Dr. Lyon Playfair on glass, no attentive workman could fail to add to his store of facts; but he demurs to the conclusion that any workman can ever be practically improved by such lectures, and if not practically improved, where is the gain?

GAS LIGHTING.

We have been favoured by Messrs. Tallis with a letter in which they explain that they had no intention, in the pamphlet lately noticed in our columns, to infer that low-priced gas was invariably or necessarily dear gas, although their facts and figures went to prove that the gas supplied by the Central Consumers' Company was bad. Messrs. Tallis do not deny that much dear gas is also bad, and they complain that we misconstrued their meaning altogether in supposing that they wished to advocate the cause of dear gas. We are glad to find that they thus appear to regard the movement in favour of cheap and good gas as a practicable and a reasonable one. As to our misconception of the purpose implied in the title to their pamphlet "Is low-priced gas cheap gas?" it appears that Messrs. Tallis merely, but, we

think, unfortunately, adopted that title from the *Journal of Gas Lighting*—a journal entirely in the interests of the old companies, who erroneously imagine that their prosperity is necessarily connected with dear gas although their own Parliamentary returns clearly prove the very contrary. An article with the title in question had appeared in the *Gas Journal*, and Messrs. Tallis simply adopted it as a connective link in a cognate question, overlooking, we presume, not only its origin but the strongly negative inference which such a question, put in such a way, would tend universally to evoke in the public mind. The negative strength implied in an affirmative question is well known, and hence in the present instance its adoption in the journal of the upholders of dear gas. Messrs. Tallis, we must add, complain of the illuminating power of the Central Consumers' Company's gas, as well as of its heating power, being inferior to that of the Chartered Company, but, according to their own statement, "the consumption was enormously increased" in the department where heat was required. A patent has been taken out by Mr. G. R. Booth, of Portland-place, Wandsworth-road, for a method of manufacturing oil gas from oil extracted from Banana leaves. The oil, it is said, is so plentiful and so cheap that it can be sold at 1*s.* a gallon. It yields a sort of oil-faint gas. The oil is exposed to destructive distillation in a close vessel at a moderate heat, and it is said that the apparatus is so simple, compact, and easily managed, that it is well suited for single dwellings, as the manufacture may be carried on in a cellar. The gas is declared to be very superior to coal gas, and the cost to be not more than one farthing an hour in a household furnace. Eton College, it seems, is about to be lighted with it, and many large mansions have already been lit up with it on an extensive scale.—A gas consumers' company is being set on foot in Marylebone to produce a gas of superior illuminating power at a cost not exceeding 4*s.* per 1,000 cubic feet, to lay on services and furnish meters gratis, limit the divisible profits to 10 per cent. and apply any surplus to a fund for future reduction in price. The capital is 100,000*l.* in 10,000 shares of 10*l.* each, with power to increase it to 150,000*l.*—The Blackburn Gas Company have declared a dividend of 10 per cent. intimated an intention to enlarge their works at a cost of about 12,000*l.* and announced an increase of consumption in their gas to the extent of 500,000 cubic feet during the past year, and a reduction of price for the future to 4*s.* 6*d.* and 3*s.* 9*d.* according to quantity consumed.—"In Leeds," says the *Liverpool Chronicle*, "the price is 3*s.* and yet the last dividend of the company was 10 per cent. to the old, and 6 per cent. to the new shareholders. In Stockton the price is only 2*s.* 6*d.* and yet the company pay a dividend of 8 per cent. In Gloucester the price is 2*s.* 6*d.* and the company pay 7½ per cent. dividend. No doubt, we believe, exists that the prime cost of gas of the first quality does not exceed 1*s.* 9*d.* per 1,000 cubic feet, and it is equally unquestionable that the existing Liverpool company could supply it at 2*s.* 6*d.* or, at the utmost, 3*s.* per 1,000 feet, with a large residue for profit." If 2*s.* 6*d.* actually yields 5 per cent. in Stockton, 4*s.* ought to yield a pretty fair return in London, making every allowance for the difference of locality. Such is the sort of conclusion to which every reasonable man must come, in spite of all the outcry of interested parties to the contrary.—The paper just quoted is now urging the Liverpool people to repeat the same gentle "pressure from without," by which alone they have ever obtained reductions of the cost of gas. The amalgamated company have recently announced another of their maximum dividends of 10 per cent. the highest allowed by their acts: and the *Chronicle* remarks that: as to the surplus which ought by the same Acts to go to the reduction of the price below 4*s.* 6*d.* it is sunk in form of additional capital, in pipes and branch works, spreading many miles east, north, and south of even the outskirts of the borough, into villages and districts far removed